

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-13 ISO-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 EB-08
INR-10 LAB-04 NSAE-00 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
L-03 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 TRSE-00
OMB-01 SSM-03 /101 W
-----086316 130637Z/17

R 111119Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1844
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY JERUSALEM
USMISSION USUN NY
USMISSION SINAI

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E. O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: ELAB PINT IS
SUBJ: GOVERNMENT LABOR TROUBLES

REF.: TEL AVIV 3193

1. REFTEL ERRONEOUSLY STATED THAT MINISTER OF IMMIGRATION-
ABSORPTION DAVID LEVY HAD BEEN APPOINTED AS ARBITRATOR
FOR THE POSTAL AND COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS. CIVIL SERVICE
COMMISSIONER DR AVRAM FRIEDMAN TOLD LABATT THAT LEVY HAD
BEEN ASKED BY GOVERNMENT AND POSTAL UNION TO DESIGNATE
AN ARBITRATOR FOR THE CONFLICT. FRIEDMAN ADMITTED THAT
HE HAD ONLY RELUCTANTLY AGREED TO THIS ARRANGEMENT,
BECAUSE HE WANTED A LAWYER WITH PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE
IN ARBITRATION, WHEREAS LEVY MAY CHOOSE "AN EXPERT"
WHOM HE CONSIDERS SYMPATHETIC TO LABOR.

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2. ACCORDING TO FRIEDMAN, THE GOVERNMENT, HOWEVER,
HAS AN ESCAPE CLAUSE BECAUSE SO FAR THE POSTAL AND
COMMUNICATIONS WORKERS HAVE REFUSED TO SUBMIT A WRITTEN
STATEMENT IN WHICH THEY DELIMIT THE ISSUES WHICH
THEY WANT ARBITRATED. THE GOVERNMENT WILL REJECT OPEN-
ENDED ARBITRATION WHICH COULD RAISE A WHOLE NEW SERIES

OF PROBLEMS. RATHER THAN FACE THAT, THE CIVIL SERVICE COMMISSION, BACKED BY FINANCE MINISTER EHRLICH, WOULD INSIST THAT THE GOI ACCEPT THE RISK OF A PRO-LONGED STRIKE.

3. IN REVIEWING THE CURRENT LABOR SITUATION, THE COMMISSIONER COMPLAINED THAT THE HISTADRUT WAS UNABLE TO CONTROL ITS MEMBER UNIONS, WHICH CREATED SERIOUS PROBLEMS BOTH FOR THE HISTADRUT'S OWN ROLE AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT. WHILE HE FELT THAT THE GOVERNMENT AND THE HISTADRUT WOULD BE ABLE TO COME TO TERMS ON AN OVERALL AGREEMENT, HE WAS CONCERNED THAT THE HISTADRUT LEADERSHIP HAD MADE NO EFFORT TO DISAVOW THE MORE EXTREME DEMANDS OF ITS MEMBER UNIONS, AND HAD ENDORSED THEIR EVERY CLAIM AND GRIEVANCE. THIS BODES ILL FOR THE PROSPECT OF RATIONAL NEGOTIATIONS.

2. IN ORDER TO PRESSURE THE HISTADRUT AND TO SERVE A WARNING ON THE WORKERS, MINISTER OF LABOR AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS ISRAEL KATZ WILL SUBMIT NEW LEGISLATION PROPOSALS TO THE KNESSET ON MARCH 12
INTRODUCING COMPULSORY ARBITRATION. THERE IS AN AUTOMATIC MAJORITY FOR THIS LEGISLATION, SINCE ALL COALITION PARTNERS HAD AGREED TO THIS IN THE COALITION AGREEMENT. HOWEVER, THE GOVERNMENT IS RELUCTANT TO PUSH IT THROUGH THE KNESSET, KNOWING
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THAT THIS WILL ONLY ANTAGONIZE THE HISTADRUT AND THAT IN THE END IT MAY NOT BE ENFORCEABLE. IN THE MEANTIME THE GOVERNMENT AND HISTADRUT ARE NEGOTIATING AN AGREEMENT FOR RENEWING THE LIFE OF THE NATIONAL ARBITRATION INSTITUTE WHICH WAS ESTABLISHED FOR A ONE YEAR PERIOD DURING THE LABOR CRISIS IN SPRING 1977, AND WHOSE AUTHORITY EXPIRES APRIL 1. HOWEVER, HISTADRUT HAS DECLARED THAT IT WOULD REJECT ANY AGREEMENT WHICH WOULD BIND THE UNIONS IN VITAL SERVICES IN ADVANCE TO ARBITRATION BY THE INSTITUTE. THE GOVERNMENT, IN TURN, FEELS THAT IT MUST HAVE A COMBINATION OF ARBITRATION AND THE COURTS AS LEGAL INSTRUMENT FOR CURBING STRIKERS DURING THE ANTICIPATED FOUR MONTH OR SO OF CHAOTIC LABOR RELATIONS IN ORDER TO IMPOSE EVENTUALLY SOME ACCEPTABLE STANDARDS FOR THE CONDUCT OF UNION LEADERS AND WORKERS. FRIEDMAN ADMITTED THAT DISUNITY WITHIN THE RANKS OF THE CABINET IS NOT FACILITATING HIS TASK. HE AGAIN REITERATED THE HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT WOULD NOT LOSE ITS NERVES BUT STAND UP TO THE WORKERS' DEMANDS. VIETS

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptoning: Z

Capture Date: 01 jan 1994

Channel Indicators: n/a

Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED

Concepts: UNION GOVERNMENT RELATIONS, NEGOTIATIONS, STRIKE SETTLEMENT

Control Number: n/a

Copy: SINGLE

Draft Date: 11 mar 1978

Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014

Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW

Disposition Action: RELEASED

Disposition Approved on Date:

Disposition Case Number: n/a

Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW

Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014

Disposition Event:

Disposition History: n/a

Disposition Reason:

Disposition Remarks:

Document Number: 1978TELAV03303

Document Source: CORE

Document Unique ID: 00

Drafter: n/a

Enclosure: n/a

Executive Order: GS

Errors: N/A

Expiration:

Film Number: D780111-0189

Format: TEL

From: TEL AVIV

Handling Restrictions:

Image Path:

ISecure: 1

Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780378/aaaacocx.tel

Line Count: 113

Litigation Code IDs:

Litigation Codes:

Litigation History:

Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM

Message ID: 19c018c9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc

Office: ACTION NEA

Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL

Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY

Original Previous Classification: n/a

Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a

Page Count: 3

Previous Channel Indicators: n/a

Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL

Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY

Reference: 78 TEL AVIV 3193

Retention: 0

Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED

Review Content Flags:

Review Date: 06 jun 2005

Review Event:

Review Exemptions: n/a

Review Media Identifier:

Review Release Date: n/a

Review Release Event: n/a

Review Transfer Date:

Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a

SAS ID: 3359343

Secure: OPEN

Status: NATIVE

Subject: GOVERNMENT LABOR TROUBLES

TAGS: ELAB, PINT, IS

To: STATE

Type: TE

vdkgvgwkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/19c018c9-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc

Review Markings:

Sheryl P. Walter

Declassified/Released

US Department of State

EO Systematic Review

20 Mar 2014

Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014